

Christian Church
(Latin American Assemblies of God)
160 Fifth Street
Gilroy
Santa Clara County
California

HABS No. CA-2060

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. CA-2060

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Latin American Assemblies of God)

Location: 160 Fifth Street, (between Church and Eigelberry Streets),
Cilroy, Santa Clara County, California.

Cilroy Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 10.627190.4096470.

Present Owner: (Lirio del Valle De Las Asamblas de Dios)
Latin American Assemblies of Cod.

Present Use: Church.

Significance: The Christian Church in Gilroy is significant as the first meeting house which this denomination erected in California. This Creek Revival inspired structure has always served as a church since it was built in 1857 and is the oldest ecclesiastical building in Cilroy. Because of disputes arising from the Mexican land grants, it was necessary to move the church a few blocks in 1885.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Christian Church was built in 1857 at a cost of \$2,500 (Cilroy Advocate, February 7, 1874; Ware's History). The church was subsequently moved to its present location in 1885 due to the loss of its previous property.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Description of Property: Part of Lot 9 commencing at a point 150 feet east of southeast corner of Block 1, North Range 2 West, Church and Fifth Streets, a lot 120 feet by 60 feet.

1878. Book 47, page 587, March 12, 1878. Massey Thomas to E.B. Ware, W. W. Whiteherst, et al, as trustees of the Christian Church. For the amount of a \$2 silver coin. "To the southeast corner of lands owned by Public School District, 150 feet by 270 feet containing one acre more or less on west side of Church Street." (Note: Massey Thomas was one of the founders of the Cilroy Christian Church. He allowed the church to be built on his property in 1885. The deed formalizes the agreement.)

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1885. Book 84, page 79, July 29, 1885. Indenture in dispute of partition suit between Henry Miller, et al, vs. Massey Thomas. Referees sold land for \$185.

Beginnning Northwest corner of 3rd and Church Street running along the northern line of Church Street 274.40 feet, hence westerly 173.80 feet, thence southerly 293.60 feet to the northline of 3rd Street 201.40 feet. This negated the previous sale of the property from Massey Thomas and necessitated moving the church.

1885. Book 110, page 254, July 30, 1885. Referees sell this parcel of land to L.N. Wood for \$1,522.60. In this parcel is Lot No. 9, Block 1, North Range 2 West on Map #5 beginning at southeast corner of Church and 5th Streets and thence along the south line of 5th Street easterly 150' thence southerly 120, thence west 149.50" to Church, thence northerly 120 feet.

1886. Book 11, page 254, January 5, 1886, \$325.
Grantor: L.N. Wood.
Grantee: Christian Church.

(Note: There is a discrepancy between the date the church was moved in August 1885 and the recording of the deed.)

1963. Book 6201, page 475, September 23, 1963.
Grantor: Christian Church.
Grantee: Christian Churches of Northern California.
"The trustees grant."

1967. Book 7788, pages 325-328, August 12, 1967, for \$7,000.
Grantor: Christian Churches of Northern California.
Grantee: Pedro Placeres and Aurelio Peralez.

1967. Book 7870, page 319, September 26, 1967. Grantor: Placeres and Peralez; Grantee: Latin American Assemblies of God. (Note: Placeres was minister of the Latin American Assemblies of God at this time. Since the church was unincorporated, he acted on their behalf.)

4. Builder or contractor: The builder of the 1857 church is not known. In 1869 the church was renovated by a "Mr. Hall and Mr. Jones, carpenters. Outside the narrow steps have been removed and a platform approached by steps on three sides has been placed before each door." (Gilroy Advocate, April 24, 1869.) J.J. Dorland, contractor, was responsible for improvements after the church was moved in August 1885. (Gilroy Advocate, August 22, 1885.)
5. Notes on original plan and construction: The only facts which could be ascertained on the church is "Gilroy built a fine building with two doors, one for the women and one for the men." (Christian Churches of Northern California Historical Brochure, prepared for the

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Centennial State Convention, Christian Churches, Stockton, California, 1955, page 10.) The Church has a seating capacity for 200 people.

6. Alterations and additions: As stated above, Mr. Hall and Mr. Jones renovated the church in 1869. Besides improving the entrance, a new carpet was installed, three "neat pulpit stands, the work and design of Mr. Jones" were added, and Venetian blinds were affixed to the windows. There is some confusion as to whether the tower and belfry date to 1857. After examination of the extant church, it appears that the belfry and entrance are original. However, it is known that after the church was moved to its present site in 1885, there were extensive renovations. "The church belonging to the Christian denomination...will be ready for occupancy tomorrow. Some three weeks ago it was removed from the site near Third and Church Streets... The changes, which include the vestibule and an improved bell tower, enlarged windows on weights and new doors, add materially to the appearance of the building. The outer walls, seats, panes and doors have been painted and inner walls and ceiling handsomely papered and bordered. The cost of the new improvements will reach \$1400 and this amount has been contributed by the membership and by liberal citizens interested in this moral institution." (Gilroy Advocate, August 22, 1885.) This writing is not clear as to what the actual construction was.

It was not possible to ascertain through research when the rear addition containing the kitchen, dining and lavatory facilities were built. Analysis showed that square nails were used, as in the church. Tax assessment rolls indicate that the land was appraised at \$185 and improvements at \$500 in 1886. In 1891 the land was appraised at \$200 and the improvements at \$1,000. It is therefore conceivable that this addition was added during this time frame.

After purchasing the church in 1967, the Latin American Assemblies of God remodeled extensively. Four separate Sunday School rooms were built in the former chancel, where the pulpit and choir were. The pulpit and stage was erected on a 45 degree angle from the vestibule entrance southeast to the east side. The pews were slanted likewise. The third window on the east side was made into a door with a staircase leading from the outside. In the rear (south) a small wooden shed containing the water system was added.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Itinerant Christian preachers started exhorting in Gilroy in the early 1850s. The Christian Church was an off-shoot of the Presbyterian faith and believed in strict adherence to the New Testament. Conceived in Kentucky, the church attracted many followers in the area and in the Midwest. With the western migration these evangelical ministers followed.

"Father Thompson and Will Higgins started preaching in February 1854 at the Severance School at Third and Church Street in Gilroy." (Centennial

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Brochure.) In 1855 the Christian Church was formally established with thirteen members including Thomas Thompson, John McGorkle, James K. Rule and Massey Thomas. This was one of the first churches in Gilroy. By 1857 the present church had been built. "There were a number of well-to-do brethren for those days, in that section, and in 1857 they built what was called a 'fine meeting house...'. Besides the house was painted, putting on some style." (Ware, page 86.) Although other Christian Churches had been organized in California at this time, the Gilroy Congregation was the first to build a meeting house.

In 1859 the Gilroy Church hosted the State Meeting, when members of the faith congregated from all over the State for about ten days. It is reported that about 1,000 followers attended, and it was necessary for the hosting church to establish temporary tents, fruit stores, shaving parlors, photo galleries and restaurants. A typical day would be "8:00 a.m. - prayer, 9:00 a.m. - convention, 11:00 a.m. - preaching, followed by an exhorter, 2:00 p.m. - dinner, 3:30 p.m. - preaching, followed by baptism, and in the evening preaching at early candlelight, followed by teaching." (Ware, page 98.) The Gilroy Church was obviously important to have sponsored the State Meeting.

A tenet of this faith is immersion. In the crawl space under the church the wooden framing of the baptismal tank remains. The tin lining rusted and was removed many years ago. Furthermore, baptisms were more frequently conducted in the many creeks in the area.

The members of the Gilroy Christian Church were influential in the community. In 1874 it was reported that "there are now 100 members, the largest membership in Gilroy, which includes some of our best and most wealthy citizens." (Gilroy Advocate, February 7, 1874.)

One of these was Massey Thomas, who had grown up in Ohio and Kentucky before coming to California during the Gold Rush. Subsequently, he returned to Missouri. In 1851 he headed west again bringing cattle with him and settled in Gilroy. Thomas became one of the area's leading cattle ranchers and farmers. A devoted member of the Christian Church, he allowed the Church to build its meeting house on his property in 1857. The formal deed on this arrangement was not recorded until some years later, in 1879. However, as happened to many other landowners in California, Massey's property was involved in legal entanglements for some years due to Mexican grants. The referees, representing the State, finally made their decision in 1885, which necessitated the Christian Church relocating. It is interesting to note that over 250 decisions about disputed property in the Gilroy area were handed down at this time.

The Christian Church members were to continue to be interested and influential citizens of the community. However, in the late 1930s and early 1940s the congregation began to dwindle and finally closed in 1963, when the Church property was deeded to the state governing body. The Latin Assemblies of God purchased the property in 1967 and has used the church every since. The congregation had made plans to tear down this historic church because of lack of workable space and build a new church

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on the adjacent property. However, because of financial considerations, this endeavor appears to be temporarily halted. In fact, since the HABS Team and the local press have pointed out the significance of the structure, the parishioners have commenced painting this historic church.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Christian Churches of Northern California, Historical Brochure Prepared for the Centennial State Convention, (Christian Churches, Stockton, 1955.) (This is a rare publication and the only copy in the area was located at the Church's headquarters, 111 A Fairmount Avenue, Oakland, California 94611.)

City of Gilroy, Assessment Books (1870-1946 - Broken) At Gilroy Historical Museum.

County of Santa Clara, Records Office Deeds, 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose, California.

First Christian Church, San Jose Family Directory, 1973. Located at the Church, 80 South 5th Street, San Jose, California.

Williams, Professor James C. The Christian Church of Gilroy - An Historical Sketch, Paper at the Gilroy Historical Museum, 3rd Street, Gilroy.

2. Secondary and published sources:

a. Books:

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Meachem, Mrs. O.R., Autobiography of the Palo Alto Christian Church, Palo Alto, California, Palo Alto Christian Church, 1953.

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Ware, E. B. The History of Disciples in California,
Healdsburg, California, 1916. (This is a rare book, which
is located in the vault of the First Christian Church of
San Jose, 80 South 5th Street, San Jose, California.)

White, Armand, History of Gilroy, (Gilroy Chamber of Commerce -
no date.)

b. Newspapers:

Gilroy Advocate, January 9, 1869, p. 2 and February 6, 1869, p.
2, and February 6, 1869, p. 2; February 7, 1874, n.p.;
August 22, 1885, n.p.; August 29, 1885, n.p.; December 29,
1873, n.p.

McCarthy, Nancy, "Old Buildings Included in National Survey,"
Gilroy Dispatch, July 3, 1979, p. 7.

McCarthy, Nancy, "Gilroy's Oldest Church Doomed." Gilroy
Dispatch, November 21, 1975, n.p.

Gilroy Gazette, December 20, 1907, n.p.

San Jose Daily Mercury, August 14, 1892, p. 111.

c. Interviews:

Pastor Naomi Guzman, Present Minister of Latin American
Assemblies of God, July 1979.

Mrs. Mary Prein, Director, Gilroy Historical Museum, 195 Fifth
Street, Gilroy, June-July 1979.

Mr. and Mrs. Leland Sanders, 209 Martin Steet, Gilroy. Former
parishioners and officers of the Christian Church. Both Sanders
are descended from some of the first settlers and members of the
Church. July 1979.

Mrs. Ruby Zimmerman, 2150 Almaden Road, River Glen Mobile Park,
Space #112, San Jose, California. Her husband (now deceased),
was pastor of the Christian Church from 1926 to 1935. Mrs.
Zimmerman, also an ordained minister for over fifty years, was
subsequently Pastor of this church from 1945 to 1947.

Prepared by Sibyl McCormac Groff
Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey

July 1979

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural style: This church is an excellent example of the western adaptation of the Greek Revival architectural style.
2. Condition of fabric: The church is in fair condition, but it is not earthquake proof, for it is on mud sill foundations. The City of Gilroy has requested that the church be placed on concrete foundations.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The church measures 32 feet by 59 feet, 8 inches. The entrance tower is 10 feet three and three-quarters inches by 8 feet 2 inches. With three bays across the front elevation, this one and one-half story church with tower is rectangular.
2. Foundations: The church rests on redwood mud sills.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: All sides of the entrance tower and the north elevation are finished in novelty siding, and the rest of the church is finished with weatherboarding. The church is painted white.
4. Structural system: Redwood post and beam construction with diagonal braces and crossed beams.
5. Porches: The entrance in the tower on the north elevation is reached by five concrete steps which terminate in a concrete pad at the door. The entrance is flanked by plumber's pipe handrails. A wooden porch has been added on the east elevation to facilitate entry to the new church entrance. This wooden platform is reached by seven wooden steps, has a plain wooden handrail and has a frame roof covered with corrugated fiberglass sheets. Another wooden porch at the entrance to the kitchen addition on the east elevation is reached by six wooden steps. On the church's west side, a door has been closed, altered, and a stairway removed.
6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney in the kitchen addition to the south. A metal chimney (cylindrical) projects from the original structure at the west side, which used to connect with the heating stove in the sanctuary.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doors: The doors to the vestibule in the bell tower have been covered with plaster board both inside and outside. Where the plaster board has worn away, the original two-

panel doors can be seen beneath. Above the entrance door, the original transom with two vertical muntins and three lights, has been covered by a sign installed by the current parishioners. The sign reads, "Lirio del Valle De Las Asamblas de Dios." (Latin American Assemblies of God.) The door to the vestibule has architrave trim and wooden sills and jambs. One door, on the east elevation, (the new entrance to the church), was cut through a window opening and has plain wood trim, wood sills and jambs. The other door on the east elevation is the entrance to the kitchen addition, which has plain wood trim and sills and jambs.

- b. Windows: Two large double-hung windows flank the tower on the north elevation. The windows have four-over-four lights and are surrounded by architrave trim. The east and west elevations have four identical windows. On the east, one window became the entrance door and one window has been closed to accommodate the new pulpit structure. In the rear kitchen addition, on both the east and west elevations, there is a double hung window with plain wood trim, wood jambs and sill with four-over-four lights. The south elevation has two identical windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Covering: The gable roof has asbestos shingle covering.
- b. Cornice/eaves: The church has a plain box cornice and frieze with cornice returns.
- c. Tower: The church tower, including the belfry, has three sections. The lowest section includes the entrance door and has corner pilasters with decorative inset panels. The next division of the tower has a window opening with double-louvered shutters. The opening has architrave trim and pilasters with inset panels featured at the corners of the intermediate tower division. There is raised molding in the frieze which occurs at the top of this division, as well as coupled ornamental scroll brackets above the corner pilasters and under the cornice. The topmost section of the tower, (the chamber that contains the bell and bell mechanism) is cubical in shape and not as deep in both dimensions as the divisions below. This section, again, has corner pilasters with no panels supporting a plain frieze and is capped by a projecting cornice with no supporting brackets. Between the pilasters is an opening with plain trim on each face with raised molding at its edge that is located on the north face of the tower and is painted with this inscription, "Christian Church - 1855". (Note: This is the year which the church was organized; the structure was built in 1857.)

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The original nave has been changed drastically since the present church assumed the property. The present platform and pulpit is located in the northeast corner of the room, the edge of the platform making an acute angle with the line of the north wall of the church. The original pews have been re-oriented to the new platform and are parallel to it. The pews are arranged in three sections with two aisles. To the rear of the room, (the location of the original pulpit), are four Sunday School rooms. The addition to the rear, (south), contains the kitchen and dining facilities and a lavatory.
2. Floors: The original tongue-and-groove plank floors are partially exposed where the carpet does not fill the nave. The kitchen addition is floored with linoleum, with tongue-and-groove floors beneath.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: The nave has an arched ceiling, which is plastered on board lath and painted white. The nave walls are plastered. A wainscoting ends at the base of the windows and is made from 3-1/2" tongue-and-groove planking. The kitchen is also plastered and painted.
4. Doorways and Doors:
 - a. The doorway from the vestibule in the tower to the nave has plain trim and has two swinging doors covered with thick plastic material. The doors to the Sunday School rooms are modern hollowcore wooden doors with a one-light transom above. One of the original doors (west) from the former chancel to the kitchen addition has plain trim which is slightly arched in section. Its companion door on the other side, (east), has been altered drastically and is mostly boarded up.
 - b. Windows: The windows in the nave have shouldered trim and are double-hung with four-over-four lights. An amber plastic decorative panel has been inserted over the glass window panes.
5. Hardware: The door leading from the nave to the kitchen boasts a handsome brass plate with Eastlake style designs of geometric cut-outs and flowers. The bell in the belfry appears to be original and is stamped "W. D. Garratt - San Francisco."
6. Notable original furniture: The original pews are austere and representative of the Greek Revival. The side elevations have rounded molding atop the arm rests, which resemble scrolls in their sinuousness. Some of these pews have been cut down to fit into the new lay-out.

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D. Site:

General setting: The Christian Church is located in a pleasant residential area a block from the main street of Gilroy. A short distance away is the Gothic Revival Presbyterian Church dating from 1869. Across the street is the Carnegie Public Library, which was built in 1910 and now is the Gilroy Historical Museum.

Prepared by Sibyl McC. Groff
Supervisor
Historic American
Buildings Survey

July 1979

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1979 summer project, the third of a four-year recording project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect; and Sybil Groff, Project Supervisor (Columbia University); with David Schaaf, Architectural Foreman (Carnegie Mellon University); Jan Cigliano (Oberlin College); and student architects William Coppa (University of Virginia), John Lourie (University of Maryland), Anne Munly (Princeton University), John Murphy (Texas Tech University), and Matthew Poe (Virginia Polytechnic University), at the HABS Field Office in Santa Clara, California. The drawings were edited in the HABS Washington Office in the summer of 1979 by architect David Schaaf. The historical and architectural data were edited by Jan Cigliano, an architectural historian on the HABS staff in 1979. Photographs were taken by photographer Jane Lidz in the summer of 1980.